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ABSTRACT

Noting that the need for basic skills education among the current labor force cannot be easily met by vocational training alone, this booklet presents the case for family literacy education to improve the skills of unemployed workers and describes the work of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). Family literacy is defined as having four components: (1) adult education; (2) parent time; (3) children's education; and (4) parent and child together time. The booklet argues that family literacy has been shown to be an effective strategy for helping families gain self-sufficiency and presents findings from NCFL research comparing the effectiveness of family literacy programs with that of adult or early childhood education programs delivered in isolation. Further, the booklet discusses how family literacy programs are becoming more work-focused and more infused with practical work experiences to increase their effectiveness for families leaving welfare for work and presents results of studies supporting the work-literacy connection. Descriptions from various family literacy programs across the country highlight how these programs are working to provide outcomes that sustain families and meet the needs of today's employers. The booklet concludes by asserting that family literacy is a welfare-to-work strategy that focuses on strengthening the family unit while helping parents become economically stable. (KB)

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Connecting Families and Work

Family Literacy Bridges the Gap

PS 029293

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Families and Work

Adults need jobs. Employers need workers.

A skills gap separates the two.

Many of the adults in our country who need and want jobs have limited skills and little work experience. They are welfare recipients facing the time and work requirements of welfare reform, immigrants with limited English language skills, and low-skilled workers unable to advance and move out of poverty.

They are parents who want better lives not only for themselves, but also for their children.

Some adults who have the talents and abilities that are needed in the workplace face enormous barriers to employment—inherent ones such as health problems or disabilities; less permanent ones such as transportation, day care, and the challenge of juggling work and family; and very serious ones such as physical and drug abuse issues. And many face these barriers without the skills necessary to function successfully as workers, parents and community members.

For most, the biggest barrier, the highest hurdle to workplace success, remains the literacy skills barrier.

This skills gap is evidenced in reports from employers that identify a shortage of qualified applicants. According to the *Fact Sheet on Workforce Literacy* prepared by the National Institute for Literacy, American businesses are estimated to lose over $60 billion in productivity each year due to employees' lack of basic skills.

A report from the National Institute for Literacy is among the research that shows there is a widespread need for basic skills education.

- 75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties
- 43% of adults with low literacy skills live in poverty (as compared with less than 5% of those with high level skills)
- An estimated 66% to 75% of welfare recipients scored at the two lowest levels of the National Adult Literacy Survey
- Almost 50% of those on welfare do not have a high school diploma

Suzanne Knell. "Learn to Earn: Issues Raised by Welfare Reform for Adult Education, Training and Work." *Literacy Leader Fellowship Report.* National Institute for Literacy, 1996-97.

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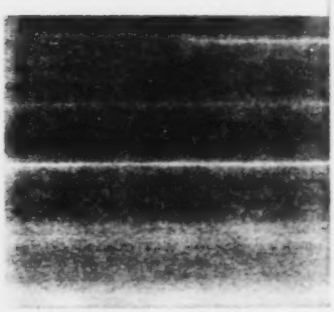
"The only way to meet the increasing demand for education created by the new technology will be through the systematic use of technology itself. This is especially true for adults with low basic skills. They have the most to lose if they are unable to use the new technology—in terms of jobs, educational opportunities, and quality of life on every front. They are the people most likely to end up on the wrong side of the now infamous 'digital divide.'"

National Institute for Literacy. *Literacy Skills for 21st Century America: A Foundation for Creating a More Literate Nation.* National Literacy Summit 2000.



Further, the number of companies reporting skilled worker shortages nearly doubled between 1995 and 1998, from 27% to over 47%.

Employers expect more of their employees than ever before. They are looking for a workforce that is highly skilled and adaptive—able to perform many functions. They are looking for employees who know how to learn; are competent in reading, writing and computation; and who have effective listening and oral communication skills. They are looking not only for basic academic skills, but also for creative thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal skills—those "soft skills" that increase opportunities for success.

Technology, too, has raised the bar for the level of skills needed in today's marketplace. "Computer skills a plus" has given way to "computer skills a must" in job requirements. Studies estimate that by 2006, almost half of American workers will be employed by industries that are either information technology (IT) producers or intensive users of IT. Successfully using information technology requires not only basic education skills but also organizational, analytical and evaluation skills. Adults with low literacy and low workplace skills are not equipped to cross the digital divide.

Clearly, a skills gap does exist—but that gap isn't easily spanned with vocational training alone. To bridge that gap, we must find ways to provide support to struggling families, to help parents help children, to provide brighter futures for families, communities and employers. Family literacy builds these bridges.

The Foundation: Literacy and Skills

What can be done to meet the needs of today's employers while at the same time improving the outcomes for families? The key is literacy and skills development.

Family literacy has been shown to be an effective strategy for helping families gain self-sufficiency. A National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) study shows family literacy programs produce significantly greater literacy gains in adults, and greater probability of school success for their children, than either adult or early childhood education programs delivered in isolation. NCFL studies also confirm that:

- 73% of the adult participants in a family literacy program complete the entire program year and move on to either employment or another educational program.
- Children's teachers rated almost 80% of former family literacy students at or above the class average on factors that included attendance, motivation to learn, family support of education, and probability of success in school, among others.

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Family is one of the most powerful indicators of success for future generations. When parents have low literacy skills, children's learning suffers. The educational level of parents and their ability to earn a living are the strongest predictors of a child's school achievement.

The National Center for Family Literacy has undertaken several initiatives to explore and demonstrate the effectiveness of family literacy as a strategy to help families gain economic independence. These initiatives have developed powerful collaborations with employers and community agencies while examining how family literacy programs should be adapted to match students' skills to employers' needs.

In South Carolina, a collaborative of state agencies contracted with NCFL to help local Head Start programs add family literacy services as a welfare reform strategy. In 1996, NCFL responded to historic welfare reform and, in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, began studying changes for families (85%–90% were welfare recipients) and the family literacy programs serving them. By 1997, NCFL was working with local programs across the country to identify program adaptations, reaching out to employers and welfare agencies to demonstrate the value of family literacy in this new climate. Since then, NCFL—through the Family Independence Initiative (FII) and, with funding from The UPS Foundation, Careers for Families (CfF)—has helped families and employers bridge the gap.

And you can see the results...

Students in the Careers for Families program in Louisville, Kentucky, are developing employment skills through job shadowing and volunteering. When the adults entered the program only 14% were employed, but at the end of the first program year, 40% of the adults had found employment.

In Boulder, Colorado, parents and children are "bridging the digital divide," getting computer training and learning English at the same time. As part of the Boulder Family Independence Initiative's "Learn and Earn" program, families earn a computer for home use based on their progress in the family literacy program.

Students in the Canton (Ohio) City Schools Even Start program are learning the skills associated with a variety of jobs. For six weeks, they shadow an employee at one of four sites—a medical center, a department store, a grocery store, or a home medical supply store. This on-the-job experience, called "Pathfinder," assists students in identifying types of employment that match their abilities and interests and helps them plan ahead for clothing, transportation, and child care needs.

Brooke DeJaneiro, an Even Start family literacy student in Canton, Ohio

"[The family literacy program] has shown me how to become a good mother to my son by setting a positive example for him to follow. I have learned how to set goals and how to accomplish them. I have learned that having confidence in myself helps me to overcome fears."

Talisalia Hood – a parent in the Charlotte, NC. Family Independence Initiative

In Long Beach, California, a Literacy Liaison helps connect family literacy parents with employment opportunities at a "one-stop" career center. Utilizing the integrated service delivery system of the one-stop, the Literacy Liaison functions as a case manager, guidance counselor, and recruitment/referral source for all eligible participants.

As part of their family literacy parent education component, the staff at the Decker Center in Barberton, Ohio, has engaged psychologists to offer support in areas such as family management skills as parents make the transition to work. Participation has increased as parents gain confidence in the quality of services and support they are receiving.

And that's just the beginning.

Family Literacy Builds Futures

Family literacy programs bring the added value of family to the work arena. Family literacy parents are investing not only in their future but also in the future of their children. They are actively working towards independence and are instilling in their children the value of education and lifelong learning.

Parents and their children attend family literacy programs together. Children participate in age-appropriate programs while parents build both the educational and related skills they need to successfully assume their roles as parents, workers and community members. Building on the foundation of parents and children learning together, family literacy emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. The interactive learning that is unique to family literacy programs strengthens the relationship between parents and children, giving families tools for making the transition to work less stressful.

Parents set goals based on their desire to create a promising future for their children. This desire, when nurtured in an intense and practical educational program like family literacy, can promote an eagerness to learn and a commitment to achieving success.

Parents in family literacy programs are investing in the future of their children.

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Family Literacy—Comprehensive by Definition

The past decade has seen the emergence of family literacy as a powerful educational approach. It is a comprehensive and intergenerational program that focuses on families, offering adults training to support their children's literacy development, and providing adults with the tools they need to ensure their economic stability and growth.

The intensive, integrated model of family literacy improves parents' basic literacy skills and overall parenting skills, children's literacy and school readiness skills, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. When a parent and child work together, the learning relationship strengthens the skills of both.

The National Center for Family Literacy supports the federal definition of family literacy that is included in major pieces of legislation passed by the 105th Congress in 1998: the Workforce Investment Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Even Start), the Reading Excellence Act, the Community Services Block Grant Act (CSBG), and the Head Start Act.

"The National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that parental educational level is the single greatest determinant of child's reading achievement."

Welfare Reform: Roles that Education Can Play, New York State Education Department, 1997.

Federal Definition of Family Literacy

Family literacy services are defined as:

"services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate all of the following activities:

(A) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.

(B) Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.

(C) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

(D) An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences."

Not only does this definition give concrete legislative support for providing and maintaining quality family literacy services, its broad use in several pieces of legislation allows for the blending of funding and other resources.

As outlined by the federal definition, the national family literacy model has four components: Adult Education, Parent Time, Children's Education, and Parent and Child

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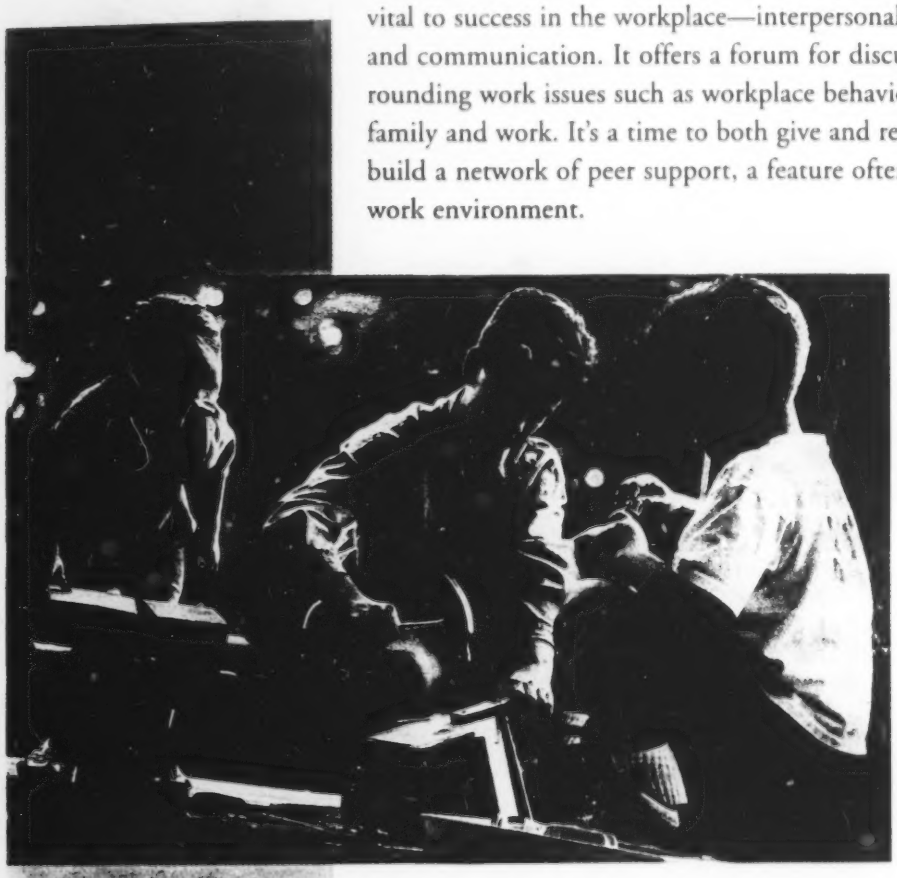
"The 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey found that 44 million American adults function at the lowest level of five literacy levels. This represents about 22% of the total adult population."

National Institute for Literacy. *Literacy Skills for 21st Century America: A Foundation for Creating a More Literate Nation.* National Literacy Summit 2000.

Together (PACT) Time. While individual program sites may adapt this model differently to meet the needs of the families and communities they serve, all the components are utilized and integrated to bring about enduring changes in families.

Adult Education: Adults study and work to improve their basic skills—including literacy, life and job skills. Learners in English as Second Language classes work on the basic language skills they need to adapt to, and succeed in, an English-speaking environment. Basic literacy skills are taught in a work-related context where the curriculum reflects real-life experiences and builds on individual students' strengths. Career exploration, volunteer opportunities, field trips to job sites, job shadowing, internships and mentoring all are finding places in family literacy programs. As parents' academic and job skills increase, they are better able to serve as positive role models for their children and to support their children's learning.

Parent Time: In this component, parents learn about their child's developmental stages and about strategies to support their children's literacy development at home and in school. Parent Time also presents an opportunity for parents to practice the skills vital to success in the workplace—interpersonal skills such as teamwork, decision making and communication. It offers a forum for discussing other real-life concerns, often surrounding work issues such as workplace behavior, expectations and norms, and balancing family and work. It's a time to both give and receive guidance. Parent Time helps parents build a network of peer support, a feature often needed as they take first steps into the work environment.



Children's Education: In family literacy programs, children take part in classroom learning activities. This component provides education for children emphasizing improved academic achievement. In preschool work-focused programs, children make connections to the workplace by reading books and singing songs related to work and they learn to value work and their parents' place in the workforce. In a preschool environment, children discover that play is their work while in an elementary school, direct connections to curriculum and work are emphasized.

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Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time: PACT Time provides opportunities for positive interactions between parents and children that promote and enhance the role of parents as their child's first and most influential teacher. It is a time set aside for parents and children to take part in activities that promote healthy family relations, demonstrate how parents can support their children's learning, and strengthen the learning partnership between parents and their children. PACT Time activities enhance parents' efforts to support their children's literacy development and success in school and are used to transfer learning to the home. Teachers guide parents by modeling positive and constructive behavior. In a family literacy program, PACT Time reinforces the mutual support systems between parents and children that can help smooth transitions to work.

Component Integration: The power of family literacy comes from the integration of its four components. When these components are integrated, the result is a unique, comprehensive system of services that empowers families. As parents identify their strengths and develop their literacy and work skills, important messages are transmitted throughout the family. Parents and children become a team in learning and partners in success. Integration ensures a deeper understanding of skills and provides a means of applying those skills in real-life contexts while strengthening the educational and non-educational bonds that hold families together.

"The success of today's working adults will help ensure the same for the generations to come. It is crucial that children learn the importance of education and gain exposure to the world of work through the parents. Only then can the intergenerational cycle of poverty be broken."

Welfare Reform: Roles that Education Can Play, New York State Education Department, 1997.

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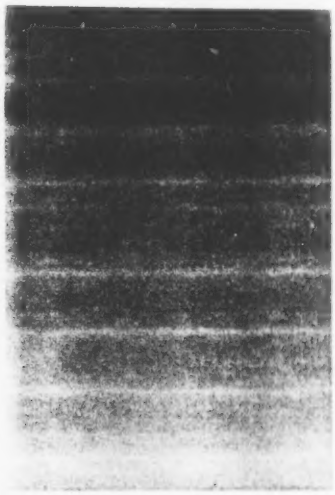
"Major corporations who have hired welfare recipients report the following benefits:

- Access to larger, more diverse labor pool
- Good, productive workers
- Reduced employee turnover
- Subsidies and tax credits
- Improved human resource policies and morale for entry-level staff"

Jack Mills and Richard Kazis. *Business Participation in Welfare-to-Work: Lessons from America.* Jobs for the Future, 1999.



A Shift in Focus—Integrating Work and Learning

Family literacy has always focused on helping parents develop the literacy skills that lead to economic independence. But welfare reform's "work first" approach has fostered a shift in focus—a concerted effort toward integrating work and learning. Family literacy programs immediately capitalized on their real life approach—teaching basic skills through the context of family and work and providing ample opportunities for adults to gain work experience, often by volunteering in schools.

While the integrity of the comprehensive four component model of family literacy has been maintained, programs are becoming more work-focused and more infused with practical work experiences. To help families meet their educational and employment goals, many programs have applied creative adaptations to increase their effectiveness.

Family literacy programs have added evening and weekend classes, making the hours services are offered more flexible so adults can receive training and still meet work requirements. Job retention and job advancement are a major focus as programs strive to help adults not only find jobs but start on a career path that will lead to enduring economic support. A range of services from career awareness to job placement and post-employment support are now common in family literacy programs.

Family literacy teaches adults basic skills through the context of family and work and provides opportunities to gain work experience

To further accommodate the mandates of welfare reform, family literacy programs are developing effective partnerships, both with welfare agencies to meet policy requirements, and with employers to meet the very real demands of the workplace.

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Research Supports the Work-Literacy Connection

The strengths and successes of family literacy are reflected in its work with disadvantaged parents and their children. NCFL has documented success in a follow-up study of 200 representative families in four states (Kentucky, North Carolina, Hawaii, and New York) one to six years after attending family literacy programs. These findings indicate that:

- 51% of the adult students had received a high school equivalency certificate.
- 43% were employed, compared to 14% before enrolling.
- 13% had enrolled in higher education or training programs and another 11% were continuing in adult education programs working toward GED certification.
- Dependence on public assistance had been reduced by 50%.

NCFL 1996

A second study conducted in 1997 by NCFL of high quality Even Start Family Literacy programs yielded similar results.

- 54% seeking educational credentials received the GED or its equivalent.
- 45% of those on public assistance reduced the amount they received or ceased to receive aid altogether.
- 40% were enrolled in some higher education or training program.
- 50% of those not currently enrolled in an education or training program are employed.

NCFL 1997

The connection between education and economics is clear. The 1998 *Digest of Education Statistics* states that people with higher levels of education are more likely to be in the labor force than less educated individuals.

- 79% of persons 25 and older with a bachelor's degree are employed.
- Only 39% of adults 25 and older without a high school diploma are employed.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Projections to 2008 reports that seventy percent of the fastest growing jobs will require an education beyond the high school level. Forty percent of all new jobs will require an associate's degree.

"As far as the workforce, just being a student in Even Start and showing I am dependable has landed me a job helping out at my neighborhood school. I have always been a hard worker, but when others notice it feels great."

Sharon – Canton City Schools Even Start

The disadvantages caused by a lack of education go far beyond the individual. Businesses know the impact of the low level of skills possessed by their employees.

- In a recent survey, 90% of Fortune 1000 executives expressed concern that low literacy is hurting their productivity and profitability.
- American businesses are estimated to lose over $60 billion in productivity each year due to employees' lack of basic skills.

Workforce Literacy Fact Sheet, National Institute For Literacy

By partnering with family literacy programs, businesses can realize the full potential of their employees. Worker training is an economically sound investment with long-lasting results.

- Investing in literacy for all Americans yields significant advantages for employers—especially given the drive to create high-performance workplaces.
- Workers with advanced or upgraded skills are among several key investments for competitive business performance, which, in turn, is essential to raising the standard of living for all Americans.

National Institute for Literacy. *Literacy Skills for 21st Century America: A Foundation for Creating a More Literate Nation.* National Literacy Summit 2000.

Family literacy has proven itself an effective tool for helping people attain job skills. Many welfare recipients face multiple obstacles to achieving self-sufficiency. In order to place welfare recipients in jobs where they can viably support themselves and their families, educational programs must be able to identify and respond to the different needs of each individual. By linking the subjectivity of family to the objectivity of employment, family literacy achieves this.

- As family literacy program models demonstrate, skills can be taught within different role contexts such as parent, citizen or worker and applied to other life roles. Skills can also be taught in a variety of settings, including on-the-job, in applied learning situations within a classroom, during tutoring sessions, in vocational classes, during parent and child activities and/or as a community activity.

Knell, Suzanne. "Learn to Earn: Issues Raised by Welfare Reform for Adult Education, Training and Work." *Literacy Leader Fellowship Report*, National Institute for Literacy, 1996-97.

Building the Bridge—Program Examples

"Welfare reform is not just about providing employment opportunities. It's about changing people's lives."

Pat O'Leary, Workforce Planning Manager, UPS Air District Louisville

Helping families make the transition from dependence to independence is a goal of family literacy programs. Family literacy programs exist in a variety of regulatory and economic environments, each of which brings challenges. Remaining within the parameters of state welfare reform requirements and accommodating parents' work schedules are examples of these challenges. The flexibility of the comprehensive, four-component family literacy model allows programs to make adaptations without compromising the quality of services to families.

Family literacy programs across the country are working to provide outcomes that sustain families and meet the needs of today's employers. Programs are building bridges for their families. Following are program highlights that demonstrate the critical pathways to success—family literacy practices that hold promise for bridging the gap between adults' skills attainment and employers' needs.

Family literacy programs teach basic skills in family and work contexts

> "Learners are more likely to retain and use new concepts and skills when they work on tasks or problems that emerge from their community, family or work lives. In contrast, when learners practice skills divorced from the actual uses of these skills in the world, they often have difficulty transferring what they have learned from the classroom to real-world situations."
>
> Jobs for the Future. 1999. *Work-Related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.

The Canton City Schools Even Start family literacy program in Canton, Ohio, focuses on work-based learning by combining work and education at local elementary schools. Parents improve basic skills and gain work experience by volunteering at their child's school. Volunteer experiences such as organizing a family math night and producing a parent newsletter enable the parents to practice the skills they learn in the classroom in a work setting. Because that work setting is the child's school, the child benefits from the parent's increased involvement in his/her education.

These work experiences—organizing family math nights and producing a parent newsletter—emphasize the development of communication, interpersonal and decision-making skills. Academic skills are taught in the context of what students need to succeed in their roles as parents, workers and citizens, a framework called Equipped for the Future developed through the National Institute for Literacy that links curriculum and instruction to achievement of real-world outcomes and lifelong learning.

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At the Decker Center site of the Family Literacy Program of Summit County in Barberton, Ohio, parents watch and discuss a video on jobs available through the U.S. Postal Service. They practice chart reading skills by finding pay scales for various postal jobs across the country, research the requirements and availability of postal jobs that interest them, and review and fill out applications. A field trip to the post office places jobs in context for adults who are considering employment.

The skills parents gain through these experiences are documented and used as a basis for employment. Because parents who have not worked have no experience to list on job applications or résumés, and because employers want some indication of an employee's ability, family literacy programs have created strategies to document students' attainment of skills as a means of providing work histories.

Programs and employers work together to identify and document the skills students need to succeed in the workplace

In Rochester, New York, one family literacy program, in conjunction with local employers, has developed a Certificate of Employability, and the Canton City Schools Even Start program uses a Career Passport to document workplace skills. These portfolios contain documentation of skills students have demonstrated in the program and are used as credentials when searching for employment. The programs and area employers work together to identify the skills students should master before looking for employment.

Family literacy programs include all members of the family

Family literacy programs build on the strengths of families and are grounded in the foundation of parents and children learning together. Any adaptation to one family literacy component will affect the other components. So as curriculum for parents shifts to integrate work-related skills and issues, children's curriculum shifts as well.

In Rochester, the early childhood classroom has undergone changes reflecting a "focus on work" emphasis. Books pertaining to careers now have a place on the bookshelves. Children can choose work-related uniforms for role play and check out related take-home materials from the classroom career center. A train set in the classroom, a visit from the driver of an 18-wheel truck, and a field trip to the airport are all part of a discussion on transportation careers. Incorporating work content into a child's world helps bring parents and children together with a common vocabulary and set of experiences to share. Children are learning the importance of education and are gaining exposure to the world of work.

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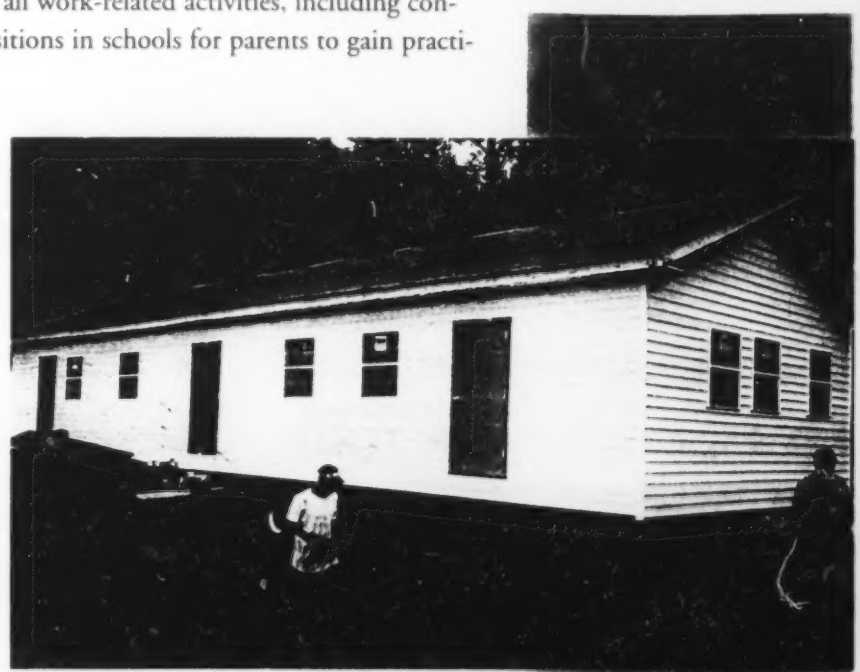
Family literacy programs provide a spectrum of work-related learning experiences

Work-related learning experiences give participants opportunities to develop a broad range of work skills and behaviors that are attractive to employers while increasing their own capacity for self-sufficiency. Participants gain a variety of workplace skills which can be applied not only in their work, but in their families and communities.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, the Family Independence Initiative works closely with the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. A list of "work first" employers is provided to the Charlotte Family Independence Initiative. This list provides students with a wealth of resources regarding vocational opportunities. The Charlotte program uses the list as a resource to provide work-related experiences for the diverse interests of its students. An Employment Facilitator coordinates all work-related activities, including contacting businesses and setting up volunteer positions in schools for parents to gain practical work experience.

In McCormick, South Carolina, work-based learning has had very tangible results. The construction industry is a major employer in the McCormick area and many adults in the family literacy program prepare for jobs, including non-traditional jobs, in that industry. The program development team initiated a Building Construction class. The students applied the basic literacy skills they were learning to a hands-on work experience while gaining work skills needed by an actual employer. The result is a new infant/toddler child care center—the only one in the county—built by the adult students in the construction class. Best of all, the community benefited as well.



Parents participating in the McCormick County Family Independence Project in McCormick, South Carolina, helped build a brand new child care center for the community as part of their work preparation.

In 1998, through a grant from The United Parcel Service (UPS) Foundation, NCFL and the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in Louisville, Kentucky, began the Careers for Families (CfF) initiative where work and learning occur simultaneously. Parents volunteer in the schools to gain work experience and then visit different employer partners in the initiative to investigate various types of jobs. Through CfF's business

"One rainy morning as we were walking to the bus stop I decided to turn around and head back home. But Ashley would have none of that. She stood there with her hands on her waist demanding that we continue on our way to school. Three buses later, when we arrived at school, I realized that my daughter has already learned the importance of an education and the commitment it takes to succeed."

Carla Amador, LiteracyWorks student in Long Beach, at the 9th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy

partners, students in the program are connected directly to potential employers and classroom teachers gain firsthand knowledge of the skills needed for employment.

Family literacy programs develop strategies to serve working families

In order to serve working families, programs have instituted flexible schedules, tested ways to extend learning at home, and involved employers.

In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the families attending one family literacy program are predominately Hmong—Southeast Asian refugees—with very low literacy skills, whose own language has been written down so recently that most are not even skilled in reading or writing it. In Wisconsin, all recipients of public assistance, including refugees, must work. Faced with preparing this special population with both work and literacy skills has presented a real challenge.

To accommodate the work schedules of students, the family literacy program offers evening classes. Program staff go to the workplace to provide classes at lunchtime and end of the day reading sessions. Critical to the success of the Eau Claire program is the support of local employers who provide the time and space for employees (many of whom are Hmong) to take part in the "Reading in the Workplace" sessions. The employers actively support the program by discussing it with employees, providing an interpreter for the sessions and continuously supporting employees in their learning.

In Philadelphia, family literacy participants who are employed are being offered the opportunity to attend a variety of adult education offerings in the community—Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, vocational training and community college courses. Saturday activities for parents and their children also are being offered. Monthly family night programs for all participating families and their extended family members feature Parent and Child Together Time, Parent Time and children's literacy.

In Long Beach, California, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time kits are sent home to help employed families continue their family literacy program. Formal lunch meetings are scheduled each week with participants who are employed. Dinners and evening Parent Time classes are offered to discuss the difficulties in balancing school, work and

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family issues. During these evening meetings, PACT Time also is offered and children are given time to interact as well.

In Ft. Wayne, Indiana, with funding from The UPS Foundation, Three Rivers Alliance offers an evening family literacy program to accommodate working parents. And in Louisville, Kentucky, parents are using laptop computers in their homes to continue working on their GED skills once they are employed.

"The most promising training programs are those that focus on employment and integrate real job situations into vocational and basic skills training."

"Many Welfare Recipients Lack the Basic Skills Needed to Succeed in the Workplace." *Research Brief*, Issue #19, Public Policy Institute of California. 1999.

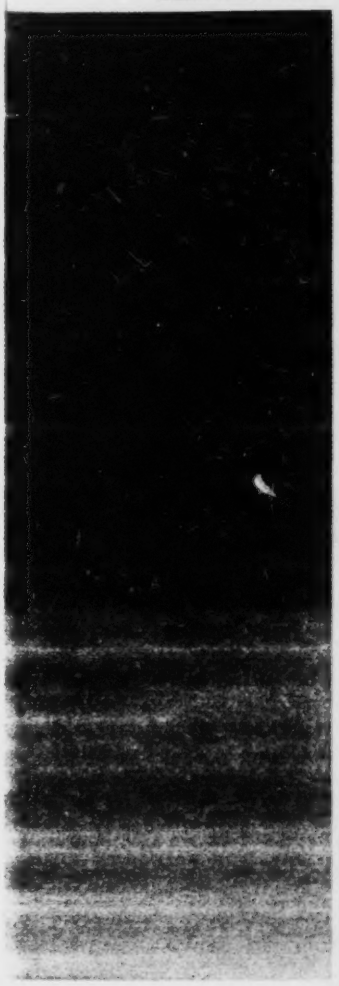
Family literacy programs build solid community relationships to support families

In a regulatory environment focused on "work first," family literacy programs are strengthening ties with employers and building solid relationships with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and welfare-to-work agencies to provide the essential support necessary for improving outcomes for families.

The South Carolina Head Start Collaboration Project brought state and local teams together to create, support and then duplicate strong approaches to welfare reform using Head Start family literacy programs as the foundation. Four state agencies—the Department of Education, the Head Start Association, the Department of Health and Human Services (Head Start Collaboration Office) and the Department of Social Services—made both financial and time commitments to this project, combining resources to create a system by which local teams transformed family literacy programs into family-to-work programs. As a result of this collaboration, many of the adults in the program obtained jobs and the community was bolstered by families receiving the services they needed.

The family literacy program run by California's Long Beach Unified School District joined forces with the City of Long Beach's Welfare-to-Work program to create LiteracyWorks. The purpose of this partnership is to maintain a comprehensive, integrated family literacy program while providing welfare-to-work and TANF participants with pre- and post-employment work activities to prepare them for self-sufficiency.

Through this partnership, the program participants are connected to the Career Transition Center (CTC), a "one-stop shop" for employment services. This model "one-stop" has a resource center with employment information such as the California Cooperative Occupational Information System that analyzes labor market information for 50 occupations, matching employers' needs with job seekers' skills. CTC's employer partner is Apple One, a temp agency that provides families not only with job opportunities, but also with important guidance on work culture and expectations.



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Four generations in a CfF classroom, Louisville, Kentucky

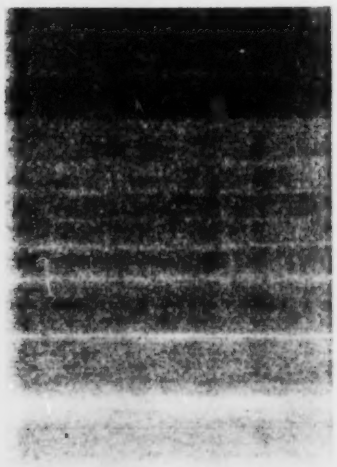
The CTC provides computers, fax machines, copy machines, telephone banks—everything needed to complete a job search. In addition, the CTC offers vocational and career assessment, career counseling, on-the-job training, work experience and computer training. The Welfare-to-Work program also provides child care and transportation, follow-up support, and workshops on such topics as résumé writing, job application skills, interviewing skills, and how to keep a job. The Literacy Liaison ties all these resources together for each family and helps connect them to the program.

Since the outset, collaboration has been a key element in the development of Careers for Families (CfF). This Louisville program has drawn from a strong support network of employers, the local school system and social service agencies to provide a wealth of services for families.

CfF engages the local business community while helping parents gain the skills they need to get and retain jobs and support their children's education. Four local business partners—United Parcel Service, Jewish Hospital, Papa John's International, Inc., and Target Stores—have joined Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) to provide opportunities for family literacy students to meet state TANF requirements while still giving them time to work toward their educational goals.

"I feel a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when a participant sets a goal(s) and takes the small steps to achieve that goal for the ultimate prize—self-sufficiency."

Runette Thomas, Careers for Families Career Instructor, Louisville, Kentucky



A JCPS Family Education Career Instructor serves as a direct link between the businesses and eight family education sites, helping adult students to research employment opportunities and prepare for site visits to potential employers. The Career Instructor matches adult students to jobs, arranges schedules and adapts curriculum in response to employers' needs and students' goals.

Family literacy's new partners:

- Head Start
- TANF Agencies
- Welfare-to-Work programs
- One-stop Career Centers
- Employers

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Family literacy programs serve ESL learners

Family literacy programs serving English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and immigrant populations focus on developing language, citizenship and [illegible] of the families in Even Start Family Literacy programs speak [illegible] for welfare but do need skills development to obtain work. Altho[illegible] conversational English skills, many do not have the skills necessary to achieve workplace succ[illegible]

Congreso de Latinos Unidos, one of the sites in the Philadelphia Family Independence Initiative, is a Latino community-based organization whose members need both work preparation and English classes. A customer service class is offered to participants once they have achieved fluency in English and have GED-level academic skills or a high school diploma.

At the Lutheran Settlement House family literacy site in Philadelphia, students can participate in job shadowing and internships at a Latino art gallery. One student was so enthused about her internship that she volunteered to spend additional time at the gallery. Her keen interest and desire to improve her skills paid off. The gallery helped her get a grant to continue her studies at the Community College of Philadelphia.

In Boulder, Colorado, ESL participants attend family literacy programs in an elementary school as part of the Boulder Family Independence Initiative. This setting provides an opportunity to help families address the cultural issue of adapting to American ways. Helping parents understand the school system—helping them feel more comfortable in their child's school—provides a vehicle for integrating families into the community.

Family literacy programs provide transitional and post-employment support

Post-employment services are important to families as they begin their entry into the world of work. Post-employment support is also im[illegible]ployees. Family literacy programs strive to build families' job [illegible] to succeeding in the workplace and offering them outlets to continue imp[illegible]ills.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, close ties have been established between a family literacy program and a variety of short-term training courses, called Pathways, which were developed by Central Piedmont Community College. The Pathways to Employment model is a career-specific, self-paced, short-term training program designed to assist families in preparation for entering the workforce as skilled employees. Adults in the family literacy program who have received their GED or otherwise reached their long-term educational goals, and are interested, are referred to the Pathways program to receive further instruction in specific job skills, workplace skills and occupational basic skills.

One unique aspect of the Charlotte program is its offer of six-month extended child day care to those parents who leave the program as a result of receiving their GED, entering the Pathways program, or getting a job. Charlotte does this to help the participants reach financial stability while participating in the Family Independence Initiative and starting their new ventures. The child care funds were made available through a North Carolina Smart Start grant.

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"The teachers helped me find more strength within myself to set goals and work toward them."

Dana Dorsey, CfF student, at the 9th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy

In Louisville, Kentucky, a Family Education Career Instructor provides a direct link between employees from family literacy programs and their employers to help them build a solid relationship. The Career Instructor serves as a convenient resource for employers and ensures that parents receive the ongoing education they need to be successful at work.

In McCormick, South Carolina, a Job Coach was added to program staff to support parents as they transition from classroom to employment. In Long Beach, California, the Literacy Liaison plays this role.

The Even Start program in Canton, Ohio, holds "Reunions" for family literacy graduates. Students have dinner and take part in parent-child activities and literacy services. Importantly, parents have an opportunity to discuss on-the-job challenges and support each other in problem solving during these evenings together.

Continuing support for parents helps them face challenges and develop strategies for success in the workplace. And continuing support supplies employers with reliable, motivated employees who are developing the skills needed for success and advancement.

A Shared Success

Parents who participate in family literacy programs have much at stake. Most who enroll in family literacy programs do so not only for themselves but for the future success of their children. The value parents place on literacy, their role as their children's most important teacher, their desire to ensure their children's success in school and their own desire for financial independence are powerful motivational tools. Parents who come to the workplace with these desires are very likely to remain in the workforce.

There are many ways to measure success. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, success is measured through the Hmong students who report they now find joy in reading to their children and in having their children read to them. Some families report they have discovered reading is a doorway to a whole new world of knowledge. Their employer reports an improvement in skills, particularly communication skills.

Long Beach, California, LiteracyWorks student Carla Amador talks about her success.

"Every morning I rise at 6:00 and by the time my day is over, I would have taken eight buses, but I won't change a thing. I love my job and look forward to going to work... I will earn my high school diploma in June of 2000 and plan to continue my education. I never thought that I could be so happy being independent. I am excited about my future and the future of my two children."

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In Louisville, Kentucky, Careers for Families student Dana Dorsey is proud of her successes and optimistic about the future:

"My own goals were to get a good job, get my GED, move out of my mother' s home and get off welfare... I got the job [at Jewish Hospital]. I recently got a promotion and a raise. I got my own apartment. I got off welfare and I'm never going back... My GED is still out ahead of me, but I will get there."

Employers also report success. Pat O'Leary, Workforce Planning Manager for UPS Air District, Louisville, Kentucky, states:

"In a healthy economy such as ours, we know we must look at all job applicants as potential employees. TANF recipients are proving to be valuable employees. We welcome family literacy students at UPS."

The success stories that come out of family literacy programs reflect the image of not only the teachers and the service agencies that have been involved in the lives of the students, but the images of the businesses that have supported them as well. Gains to employers, when partnering with family literacy programs, go beyond that of having a productive, skilled, reliable employee on the job. Businesses are helping build the workforce of the future by helping parents help their children—as parents succeed, children become more successful. Building strong community relationships not only benefits the bottom line, but also serves as an example of committed corporate citizenship.

"There is no better place to end 'welfare as we know it' than at the door of an employer. And if jobs are the answer to poor people becoming self-sufficient, then employers must be in the picture."

Jack Tweedie and Jenifer Vasquez. "Selling Employers on Welfare Reform." *State Legislatures Magazine*, February 1999.

Closing the Gap

Welfare reform brought change to the lives of welfare recipients across the nation. In response, states sought ways to help families make the transition from welfare to work and found that changes in programs supporting these families were necessary. The National Center for Family Literacy also recognized the need for program adaptation in a "work first" environment and promotes work-focused, intensive, high quality, comprehensive programs for disadvantaged families.

Family literacy is a welfare-to-work strategy that focuses on strengthening the family unit while helping the parents become economically stable. Family literacy programs provide parents with the skills they need in the workplace and their children with the tools they need to succeed in school. In addition, parents learn how to help their children in school, and both parents and children embrace lifelong learning. Through a work-focused family literacy program, participants gain skills that can be applied throughout their lives—in their work, their family and their community.

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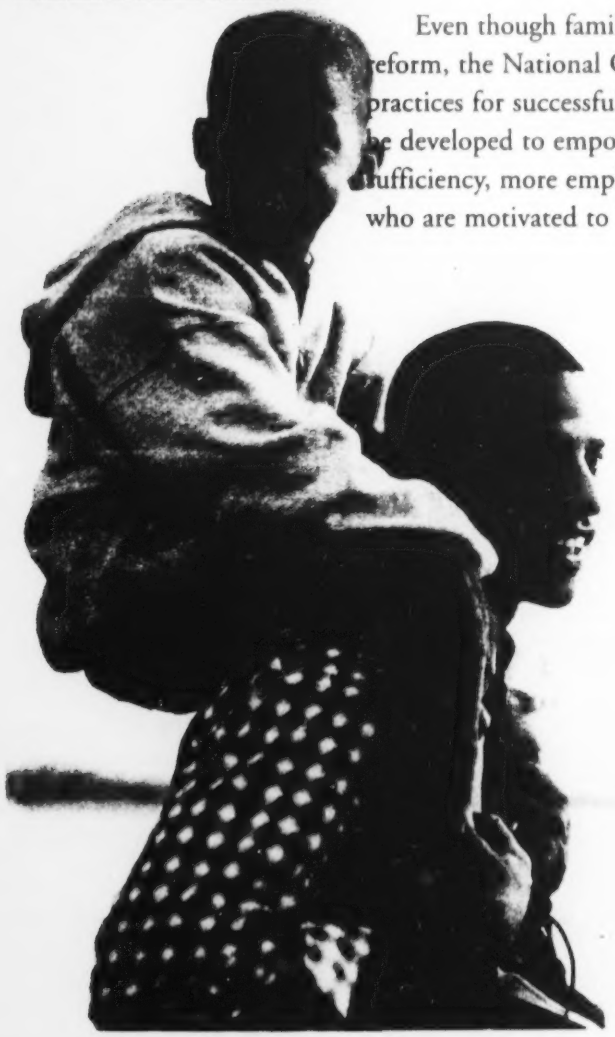
"I've learned that the power to change my life and the responsibility for my life is my own, and the power is within me."

Former family literacy student Regina Lynn, at the 8th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy

Employers are increasingly looking to programs like family literacy to find and train workers. Through connections with TANF agencies, job training and family support agencies, family literacy programs provide employers with a pool of workers. They help students develop not only basic work skills but also those intangible skills of problem solving and critical thinking that employers value. Job coaches, literacy liaisons, career instructors and employment facilitators provide the support necessary to ensure smooth transitions and continued success for both workers and employers.

NCFL has developed a Focus on Work training for practitioners who want to integrate work-related learning skills into their programs. The training focuses on how to use family literacy as a strategy for helping low-income workers or the unemployed get and retain jobs. It also focuses on how businesses can reduce their entry-level workers' turnover and shortage by building partnerships with family literacy.

Even though family literacy already has proven to be an important vehicle for welfare reform, the National Center for Family Literacy continues its efforts in search of best practices for successful programs. Across the family literacy field, more strategies will be developed to empower families, more families will transition from poverty to self-sufficiency, more employers will look to family literacy programs for skilled workers who are motivated to learn—more bridges will be built and more families will succeed.



For more information on linking family literacy and welfare-to-work, contact the National Center for Family Literacy at (502)-584-1133 or visit the following Web sites:

National Center for Family Literacy—http://www.famlit.org

Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Welfare Reform—http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare

ERIC Clearinghouse Adult, Career, and Vocational Education—http://ericacve.org

Jobs for the Future—http://www.jff.org

National Governors' Association—http://www.nga.org

National Institute for Literacy—http://www.nifl.gov

Welfare to Work Partnership—http://www.welfaretowork.org

Family Independence Initiative – Development Sites

Canton City Schools Even Start, Canton, OH

Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa Valley, Eau Claire, WI

Three Rivers Literacy Alliance, Ft. Wayne, IN

McCormick County School District, McCormick, SC

Rochester City School District, Rochester, NY

Family Independence Initiative – Pilot Sites

Family Literacy Program of Summit County, Akron, OH

Boulder Family Indpendence Initiative, Boulder, CO

Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, NC

LiteracyWorks, Long Beach, CA

Mayor's Commission on Literacy, Philadelphia, PA

Careers for Families

Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY

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The National Center for Family Literacy is a nonprofit organization founded in 1989. NCFL works to ensure that all families at the lowest ends of the literacy and economic continuum will have opportunities to expand their education and improve their economic and social well being through quality family literacy programs.

NCFL provides leadership for family literacy development nationwide; promotes policies at the national and state level to support family literacy; designs, develops and demonstrates new family literacy practices that address the needs of families in a changing social, economic and political landscape; delivers high quality, dynamic, research based training, staff development and technical assistance; conducts research to expand the knowledge base of family literacy; and creates and supports systems which will help sustain family literacy programs.

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